

Chris O'Brien

From: Julie Lauterbach <julie.lauterbach@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 7:59 AM
To: House Finance Committee; Rep. Abney, Marvin L.
Subject: Testimony in SUPPORT of Budget Article 12 Section 12d Perinatal Doula Services and H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act

To Chairperson Abney and members of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Julie Lauterbach-Colby and I live in East Providence, Rhode Island. I am in strong support of Budget Article 12 Section 12d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act. This budget article and bill are crucial to improving the health and safety of pregnant individuals, particularly Black and Brown families. A doula is a nonmedical professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and informational support to a person who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. A doula's purpose is to help people have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience. This bill has been crafted collaboratively by doulas, birthing families, community organizers, doula advocates, and legislators, I support a bill that reflects the ongoing input of these key stakeholders.

I am one of many women who worked with and loved having my doula present at the birth of my son. I knew before I hired a doula, that doulas decrease the need of a C-section by 23%, and there is a 9% drop in the use of pain medication among women who have a doula. Most importantly, however, doulas reduce health disparities for Black and brown pregnant people. There is an increase in Black maternal health by providing quality and consistent care in labor and delivery -- something that is desperately needed in a society that still has a high rate -- higher still among Black women -- of maternal death in childbirth.

Childbirth was the most vulnerable and exposed I have ever felt throughout my life. I relied on the care, advice, and presence of my doula during my 12 hours of labor, four of which were active labor -- the most exhausting, painful time. My doula kept my desires and wishes for my birth front and center that entire time, and I delivered my baby in a room that was full of love and celebration. My story is shared with millions of other women across the world, and I take tremendous pride in that shared experience.

In closing, I urge you to support Budget Article 12 Section 12d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act.

Sincerely,

Julie Lauterbach-Colby